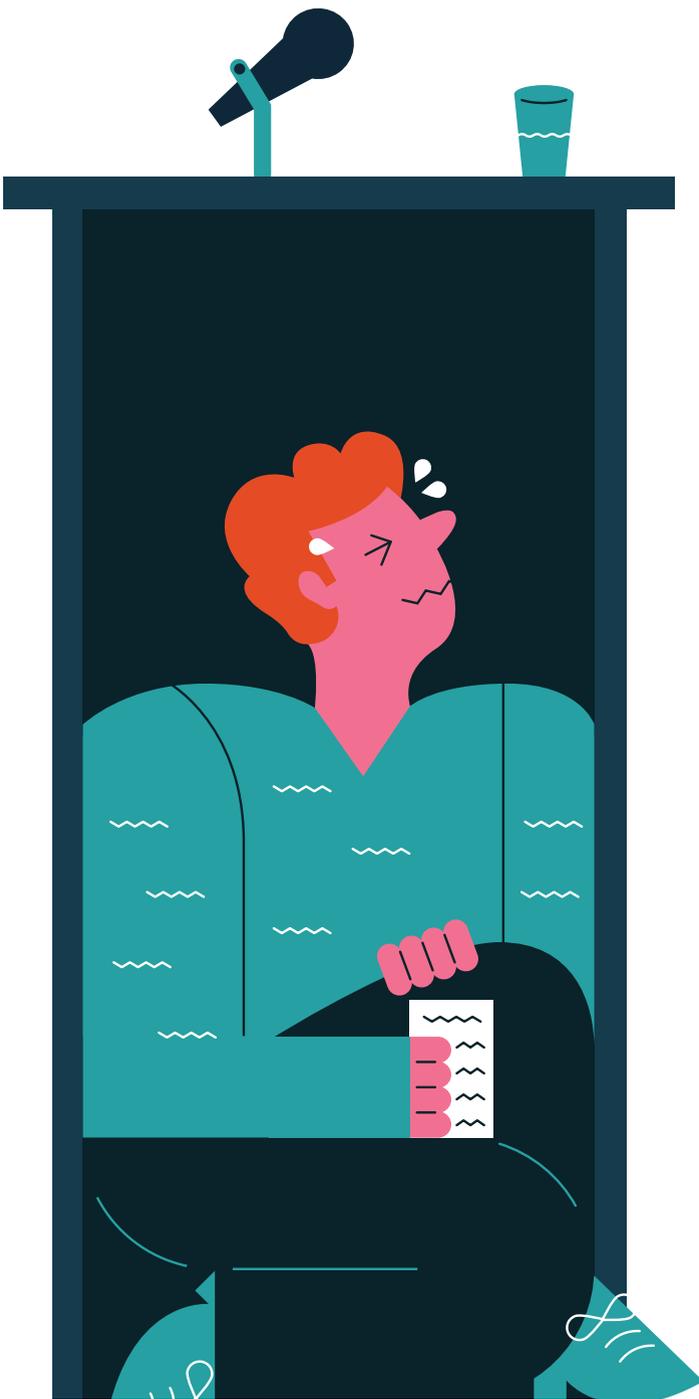


Have No Fear: How to Deliver a Great Presentation

by Bill Jagrowski and A.C. Chan

The “three-legged stool” of content, audience, and delivery makes a reliable framework to up your game as a public speaker.



Public speaking is still the No. 1 fear in America, followed by the fear of death. As comedian Jerry Seinfeld put it, if you were at a funeral, more people would rather be in the casket than giving the eulogy. So while reluctance is common, it can affect your career.

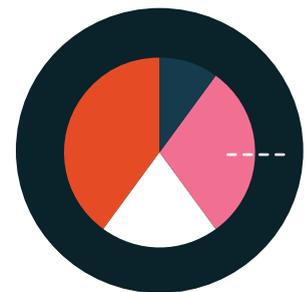
A report on career development and personality types from Truity Psychometrics found that extroverts receive 25 percent higher salaries on average compared to their introvert counterparts. Although effective speaking is not the only skill a leader needs, it can be argued that it is one of the most important.

Getting up and talking through your slides won't cut it anymore. That's what everyone does.

Instead, think of an effective presentation as a three-legged stool, balancing each component perfectly. Yes, there is content, the reason for your presentation and your material, but that's only one leg of the stool. The other two legs are the audience and the delivery of your content. When you

bring together these three elements, coupled with the right preparation and practice, you have the formula for a great presentation.

Mastering all three areas cannot be achieved overnight. Instead, pick the leg you're drawn to and focus on improving there first.



The Content

The “Why” and the “What”

Think about the last presentation you delivered. Can you clearly articulate the main point of “what” you delivered and “why” you delivered it? In general, presentations tend to be an opportunity to dispense information. That's not good enough. We can easily deliver information through different media. We've all heard that time is the most precious resource we have.

the audience also helps you prepare to think about the third leg: delivery.

Whether presenting to an audience of one or a thousand, it is important to consider four aspects of your audience: context, demographics, personality, and variation.

CONTEXT

To determine context, imagine yourself as an audience member sitting down to hear your presentation. In what setting are they hearing the message? What are the conditions of the room? What time of day is it? How much do they know about the topic? Has anything happened before the presentation that will influence their thinking? What are their expectations? Thinking through the context and setting of your presentation helps ensure that you aren't tone deaf to the audience's reality.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Considering the demographics of your audience (e.g., age, gender, race, religion, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, political view, etc.) is the second aspect to consider. While demographics aren't perfect predictors of an audience's attitudes

or demeanor (especially because stereotypes can get in the way), considering them will help you leverage "emotional intelligence" as you prepare for and deliver your message.

PERSONALITY

The personalities and social styles of an audience—particularly for smaller audiences—go a little deeper than raw demographics to consider the behaviors and messaging preferences for people. To get a handle on personality preferences, you can leverage formal models such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator or the DISC profile, or just your own sense of people. Either way, considering your audience members' natural preferences for visuals, details, numbers, or information sequencing helps you to anticipate concerns, connect with listeners, and convey your message.

VARIATION

A common complication in becoming audience-centric is the variety you almost always encounter within the audience. This can even be true for an audience of one if that person seems to change preferences or reactions from one setting

to the next. Variability can involve any combination of the three previous audience considerations—context, demographics, and personality. Your job as a presenter is to find common ground across your audience.

Once you've analyzed your audience, reconsider your message. Make sure your "why" and "what" align with your understanding of your "who." Your audience analysis also helps you effectively deliver your content. It can help you read your audience and anticipate how you'll handle audience reaction during the presentation.



The Delivery

The "How"

Delivery, the third and final leg of our stool, is all about presenting to the audience. You might have the best content to share with the perfect audience. But a lackluster delivery is a sure way to turn off your audience. Remember, you are there at the pleasure of the audience. Consider the experience you want

to create for them. While not an exhaustive list, these tips are low-hanging fruit to add polish to your delivery.

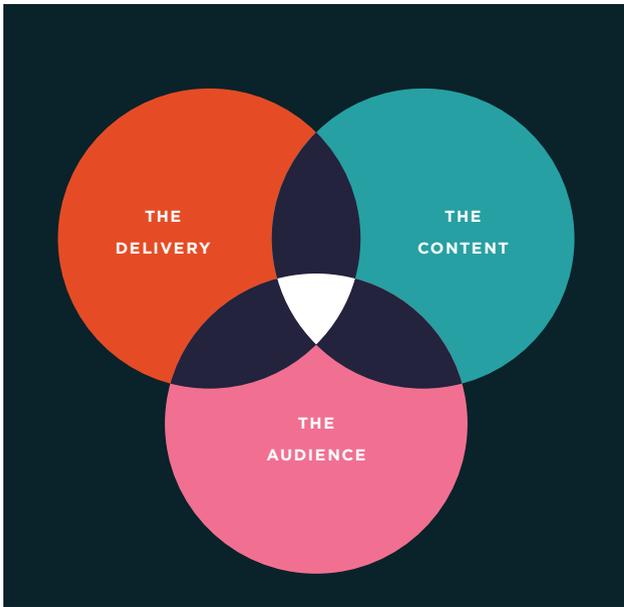
VENUE

Do a little homework. Get to know the venue for your presentation. What kind of space is it? If you need a mic, can you get a lavalier and be hands-free or will you have a handheld? Will the projector include the right hookups for your laptop? When it comes to PowerPoint, assume the technology will fail. Have a backup plan just in case.

STAGE SPACE

Usually, you don't have to be stuck behind the podium. You are the presenter; the audience should mostly focus on you. Yes, you'll have content to show through visual aids such as PowerPoint. But don't play second fiddle. Don't always yield the stage to your visual aids. In general, you have five locations to use on stage: left, center, right, front, and back. Be deliberate. Maximize your use of the space to complement your presentation.

THE THREE PARTS TO A GREAT PRESENTATION



BODY LANGUAGE

This can range from simple to complex, depending on the experience you are trying to create. It begins with your head and the facial expressions you use. If you talk about how you had to lay off 100 people and you have a big smile on your face, this might not connect well with your audience. Next, you have your arms and hands. Hands in your pockets might appear too casual, but flapping like a bird might be over the top. Find the right balance to articulate your points through your body language.

YOUR VOICE

This wonderful built-in tool is often overlooked. A few strategic decisions can enhance what your audience hears. First, there is volume, ranging from loud to soft. Then, you have pitch, ranging from a high squeak to a booming bass. Pitch is a great tool to discern different characters in a story. Pace is the rate at which you talk. You may speed up during an exciting part or slow down as you build to a critical point. Finally, don't forget about the powerful pause. If you just made the brilliant point of your presentation, don't rush forward and keep talking. Pause. Give your audience a few seconds to absorb what you just shared.

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

Sports coaches and military leaders both practice for the same reason—so when the need is real, their teams can comfortably execute. As a presenter, strive for a one-to-one ratio between the time you spend creating content and the time you practice your delivery. For example, if it took you one hour to prepare that 15-minute presentation, you should practice delivering it at least four times. For more formal presentations, include additional time to record yourself, review, and adjust. This practice also prepares you for the inevitable technical glitches. When they can't pull up your presentation, you should still be ready to deliver value to your audience—even without the slides.

While it's very common, fear of public speaking can end up being a barrier that not only prevents audiences from benefiting from your knowledge, but affects your success as a business leader. By focusing on the three-legged stool of "why and what," "who," and "how," you can turn your "good" into "great" and deliver presentations that bring value to your audience. 🦋

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